

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, December 9, 1889, with transcript

Letter from Mrs Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Moxee, December 9, 1889. Dear Alec:

Can't you remember some pretty quotation about the snow wrapping the earth as in a shroud and all nature mourning covering herself with a thick white veil of mist? Any way this describes the view I see from my windows. Snow and a wall of white fog shutting out all the world and the pathway along which we shall be travelling tonight. If I thought of the high mountain pass over which we shall travel in storm and darkness tonight I might feel a little nervous, but fortunately I don't. I am nice and clean and have changed all my things and I am always sure accidents will come when I am not as now, prepared for them. There is no wind and the snow blanket which has been growing only since this morning looks very thick. I wonder will it be very hard to force one's way through the deep snow of mountain drift. There are plenty of sharp turns and curves of high trestle bridges off which the engine could easily dash down to the deep ravine below. Don't I make your hair stand on end. I wouldn't, only that I know the journey will be over long ere this reaches you.

They are having a company dinner in there and we ladies superfluous luxuries are sitting together in the cosy parlor by the bright wood fire I like this house, it is so wide and uncramped for room anywhere. No sudden purposeless Queen Anne turns and projections to trip up the unwary. All straight and square and honest.

Yesterday the mist cleared, although not sufficiently to allow us to see the mountain of our desires and the sun came out bright and warm for the first time. Willie Ke took me for my first walk through the mud, to the mill where the men were busy crushing the barley and 2 letting it pour into bags a hundred-weight each, which are then placed in a cart and taken to the farmyard and fed to the stock. Mr. Ker had to clear a way for us through the crowd

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of pigs great and little which were scrambling for the grains of meal that fell from the bags and then he showed me the machinery. It is worked by a water wheel turned by water from the ditches. The water looks muddy enough outside but rushing through the mill tank one sees how clean and clear it is. Mr. Ker says some learned Professor or other declared this to be the finest water he had tasted in America. The mill is used to saw wood and other things. Then we went to the cigar factory. In the shed adjoining thousands of tobacco leaves are hanging to dry, pretty well shrunk and shrivelled now but evidently long and broad handsome leaves in their time. I had never any idea of what tobacco leaves were like in their natural state and was much interested. Mr. Ker said that the contents of that shed as they now were, were valued at five thousand dollars. In the factory six or seven men were busily engaged some preparing the leaf, others making and rolling the cigars. There were four different grades, the best being formed of whole dried pieces of leaf rolled up into two smooth pieces the very end of which is gummed, the cheaper, of the same tobacco but odds and ends left from the other, rolled up in one leaf and then pressed into shape in forms. Mr. Ker gave me a sample box of each grade. I rather hesitated to accept as his wife had only that morning told me of this habit of his, she asked me if I did not think that he ought to get his cigars at wholesale from the company. I did not like to say anything but admitted I thought it seemed only fair, still it could hardly be a very heavy item of 3 expense. On the contrary Libby said it was a very heavy one, for Mr. Ker was so anxious to further the interests of the company in every way that he sent boxes of these cigars all over the country to every one he knew and charged them to himself at retail prices. So as I say I hesitated but Mr. Ker insisted and is very unwilling even to allow me to pay for the two boxes I bought as a present to Mr. McCurdy. After that we went through the pig yard and saw the mothers with their young, too young to roam at large, the hospital ward with two sick pigs and the fattening ward where they fatten hogs for market. All seemed clean and well cared for, thence to the store house where were two thousand pounds of bacon waiting shipment and hundreds of cans of lard.

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There was Sam's house close by, a tiny box, a great contrast to Mr. Ker's prosperous-looking home, the largest and most substantial in Yakima. I rather wanted to go inside but forbore when Mr. Ker said it was now the bachelor quarters of some of the officers and wasn't exactly in a state for ladies' inspection. I rather thought so when on remarking to me of them that he had had an escape he frankly admitted that he hadn't had time to fix things for two days! This was from the scion of the "Old Scotch family". Excuse my spelling, I think it is leaving me since I came out here — Don't say you didn't know I had it to lose!

Papa is very much pleased with the condition of affairs here. He showed me the estimated expenditure and revenue sheet for next year. The expenses were calculated to amount to some forty three thousand dollars including three thousand for contingencies and the revenue to forty 4 one thousand, while the produce assets and increase in cattle and hogs would be thirty-six thousand dollars one and above. Mr. Ker says they have one hundred and twenty five miles of ditches and that they charge a dollar and a half an acre for the use of their water. They had fifteen acres under cultivation of tobacco and the manufactured crop was worth twenty thousand dollars. Next year they will cultivate fifty acres.

Papa and I took dinner with Mr. Scudder yesterday. He has a most wonderful gate. I haven't the least idea of it's mechanism but there is a long cross beam suspended in the air way above the heads of people in a high cart, and from either end dangles a stout rope with a loop at the end. This rope the visitor in the cart pulls dragging the beam nearby to his head and then the gate rises and suddenly slides to one side in the most unexpected and incomprehensible way. When the caller gets through he is expected to pull the other rope and the gate will jump back again in the same ridiculous way. It is however a great comfort not to have to get down and open the gate, at least it is to those who know how to pull the rope. Papa and I didn't and I was just about to get down and push when one of Mr. Scudder's daughters galloped down the avenue riding bare-back to our help. She slipped off her horse like a very bug but somehow lost her balance tumbled on the grass while her horse ran off home, she started after him, then giving up came and opened the gate, she

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is a bright nice looking child Daisy's size. There are five of these daughters, all quite nice looking and one of them very sweet and pretty with something of Berta about her big blue eyes and lovely delicate skin and fair hair. Another has curly red hair and light eyelashes and a beautiful crop of freckles, still I 5 think she may be pretty by and bye.

It was very interesting to see the butter machinery. The milk is poured into a big vat and runs from thence through a rubber hose into an iron vase with two bottoms both sliding towards the side. There is a little fan-shaped projection and the whole thing is made to revolve very fast causing the cream to separate from the milk. The cream being lighter rises to the surface and flows out through a little ridge in the mouth of the vase down the cover through a tube into vats, while the milk flows to the bottom and then somehow raises through tiny tube inside the face to a pin hole opening and thence to a rubber hose and so into another vat whence it is fed to the hogs. The cream stands twenty four hours and then is put into a big barrel and revolved until butter comes and there is put through a crusher that squeezes out all milk. The butter is then put in presses and stamped and shaped. Fingers never touch it. It is very good and retaile for 40 cents.

Lovingly yours, — Love to Mamma and babies, Mabel.